

THE LABOR QUESTION.

MR. POWDERLY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE.

The Aims and Objects of the Knights of Labor--Grievances of the Workmen.

WASHINGTON, April 20.—The special committee of the House of Representatives to inquire into the labor troubles in the Southwest held its first public session today. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining the use of a convenient room in the Capitol the committee had to hire one in an adjacent building—the Congressional Hotel—at which the accommodations were very deficient. The hour of meeting was fixed at 12 o'clock noon; but it was 1:30 o'clock before the committee met to go to work. It consisted of Ex-Gov. Cortis of Pennsylvania, chairman; Messrs. Burns of Missouri, Crain of Texas, Outwater of Ohio, Stewart of Vermont, Parker of New York and Buchanan of New Jersey. All the members were present except Mr. Stewart, who is absent by leave of the House. Among the prominent persons in attendance were, as representatives of the Knights of Labor: T. V. Powderly, grand master workman; J. W. Hayes and William O. McDowell, members of the Executive Board, and Frederick Turner, grand secretary; as representative of the railroad interests: Wager Swaine, counsel, and as representatives of the Women's League of America: Mrs. Charlotte Smith and three other ladies. A copy of a stenographic report on hand to make a full report of the proceedings for the railroad companies.

MR. POWDERLY was the first witness, and as such was sworn by the Chairman. He is very far from filling, at least in outward appearance, the typical idea of the hardy son of toil. On the contrary, he appears to be a quiet, reserved, delicate-looking gentleman, who has spent some fifty years of existence in an easy, contented way. He dresses plainly, in a dark suit, except as to a large, drooping mustache; wears spectacles and has a high intellectual forehead.

The Chairman, addressing him, said: "You understand that this committee is raised by the House of Representatives for the purpose, if possible, of getting down to the bottom of the unrest and disturbance which now exists in the country, and especially as to the conflicts between labor and capital, and between the employer and the employee. This committee is fully sensible of the course you have taken in your previous life, and of your disposition to reconcile the unrest of the people. Therefore, we call you as the first witness. Be pleased now, to give to the committee, in your own language, your impressions as to this matter."

"While I was in the West," said Mr. Powderly, "I heard from the men of little abuse which I do not think the manager of the Missouri Pacific railroad knows anything about. Along the Iron Mountain railroad they have a system of taking 25 cents a month from the wages of a man who receives 75 a day, and so on in proportion on for what they call a hospital fund. Then, the men claim that as soon as they are taken sick they are discharged and are denied the right of entering the hospital. Then there are instances, which can be proved, where men have made contracts to buy land from the company on regular yearly installments, and when they have paid all but the last installment, they were discharged from the employment of the company. In that section of the country it is different from the East. Men cannot go to the next town and get a new job, and the consequence has been that, in at least one particular case, the man was obliged to remain where he lost his property. The consequence of that kind."

The Chairman—Can you have witnesses called before the committee to prove facts?

Mr. Powderly—Undoubtedly, if I am properly informed.

Mr. Buchanan—In your inquiries have you found that these causes of discontent existed?

Mr. Powderly—Yes.

The Chairman—Will you state the purpose of the organization of the Knights of Labor—whether its purpose is the protection of the interest of labor, and whether it is peaceful in its action?

Mr. Powderly—The aim of the organization of the Knights of Labor is to benefit the laborer and secure a better feeling between him and his employer. All our methods are peaceful. We never counsel anything of a violent nature. A member of the organization may, once in a while, commit acts of violence. We cannot help that. It is a matter beyond our control; because, when men feel that they have endured wrong, there is no law which can properly restrain them.

The Chairman—Do I understand that the Knights of Labor as an organization do protect labor, not only on railroads, but also in mines and factories?

Mr. Powderly—We attempt to do that; our association is intended to be an educational one. We aim at having our members study the conditions by which they are surrounded, and not only the conditions but those of the men for whom they work.

Mr. Buchanan—In order to have the way to intelligent action?

Mr. Powderly—Yes, sir. I have claimed that it is no more than right for both to meet on equal terms, and the words of each being said, it seems to me that they do that; they cannot properly fail to do so.

The Chairman—Do not ask you to divulge any of the secrets of the Knights of Labor, but you have stated that the object of the society is to protect the interests of the country, and as possible agents the exactions of incorporated capital.

Mr. Powderly—To protect not only the labor of the country but to protect the interests of the country as well. We desire the manufacturers shall be in such a condition that they will be able to pay good wages. We have no quarrel with legitimate enterprise. If you discover a Knights of Labor along the railroad have violated the law of the land, or its own laws (and the committee will discover that law) we will be as ready to let it in punishing them as we are in punishing the rights. When I said that I was willing to expose everything in connection with the organization of those who have the right, or if one man in particular would do the same thing, I speak fairly and truthfully. I have no objection to showing everything connected with the organization, in a fair and honest way, and everything else I am willing to let everything before

the committee and before the world. I want it understood that, so far as the Executive Board is concerned, I have from over 4000 assemblies letters of indorsement of a secret circular of mine which, since it was issued, has been made public. These indorsements were not in what I have said, so that you can understand from the tenor of the circular the character of our organization. When I stated that our organization was willing to meet our contestants before the courts I had no idea that I was making a wrong statement. I believe that the law is on our side, and that when a man violates the law of the land either as a Knight of Labor, or as a private citizen, or as a member of a corporation, he should be punished for it and that his connection with an organization should be no shield for him; and I have thought on the other hand that the man who violates the law and is worth millions of dollars should suffer the same as the poor man. I have made that statement, and people have seen fit to see in it a slur upon the law. If that is anarchy, in the name of God what is law? Mr. Burns—The country generally (and I doubt not, properly) seems to place a good deal of confidence in your integrity, your intelligence, and your patriotism. Being disposed to consider questions practically, I ask if you have given thought to the question of a legislative remedy for the evils to which you have alluded?

Mr. Powderly—I have never worked it out properly; I have thought it over, but have not followed it to its conclusion.

Mr. Burns—Will you be able, during the sitting of this committee, to give us your views on the question of the remedy for the wrong?

Mr. Powderly—How long is the committee likely to sit?

The Chairman—About two months.

Mr. Powderly—I think I will be able, because in that time you will have an official declaration from the chief men of our organization on that point.

Mr. Burns—I would suggest further that it may be well to consider what, in your judgment, can be constitutionally done, and what might be done, and what ought to be done, by amendments to the constitution.

Mr. Powderly—I shall do so; and I thank you for the suggestion.

Mr. Crain—I find it stated in the bill of grievances produced by you that the men are asked to redress time again, but in vain; that the Executive Committee of the Knights of Labor sought to settle the matter, and that the reply of the general superintendent of the Missouri Pacific railway, refusing to agree to a conference, was, "I am not interested in your dispute, but I am interested in the fact that you are interested in my company stores, and that the men are compelled to deal in these stores. The employees are not told in any words that they must deal there, but they are reminded that it is to their interest to do so. If a murmur of complaint is to reach the ear of the president of the company it must go through the superintendent, and a man will be charged as soon as he utters a word of complaint. This man whose mode of investment in the railroad know nothing about this. In many places double prices are charged in these stores."

Mr. Buchanan—Will you be able to furnish specific instances of this kind?

Mr. Powderly—The committee will find proof of all these things. The men also complain convicts are brought from the penitentiaries in Texas to work on the railroads and that striped suits may be seen side by side with honest labor in track repairing. That statement has been made to me by members of the committee.

Mr. Buchanan—You promised to furnish the committee with some view as to the legislative remedy for troubles of the kind now existing.

Mr. Powderly—You also, in considering that question, take into view the complexity of this government and the divided responsibility between the Federal and State legislatures, so as to make your suggestion such as the National Legislature can duly act upon.

Mr. Powderly—I will do so.

Mr. Crain—The principle of the organization known as the Knights of Labor?

Mr. Powderly—Our organization aims to settle all differences by arbitration and reconciliation, and that is one reason why we have difficulty in union. I have never thought of anything but our organization should have anything to do with strikes. So, too, boycotting is something which we have never legislated on but once, and that was to restrain it, and our restraining influence will go still further.

Mr. Crain—Then the principle on which your organization is based is that of bringing capital and labor into closer relations?

Mr. Powderly—Yes.

Mr. Crain—And this strike went into effect on the authority of District Assemblies, not that of the general organization?

Mr. Powderly—Our general organization has never given its general officers any power over the question of strikes.

At this point the committee adjourned.

Death Sentences Commuted at Fort Smith, Ark., April 20.—Death sentences of five of the eight Indian Territory murderers have been commuted to imprisonment for life in the Detroit House of Correction. Those commuted are Meredith Crow, who killed a desperado named Cobb; Cerny; Robinson Kemp, charged with killing Henry Rich, postmaster at Fort Washita and Hewanucka; Luce Hammond, and one Wiley, a Cherokee, who murdered a Cherokee for a plug of tobacco. The Indians who killed Owens were only boys at the time of the killing. The Judge and District Attorney both recommended commutation of sentences.

The Fatalistic Cases. We often see children with red eruptions on face and hands, rough, scaly skin, and often sores on the head. These things indicate a depraved condition of the blood. In the growing period, children have need of pure blood by which to build up strong and healthy bodies. If Dr. Pierce's "Golden Medical Discovery" is given, the blood is purged of its bad elements, and the child's development will be healthy, and as it is a germ of disease, it is a germ of suffering and is sure to result from neglect and lack of proper attention to such cases.

Killed in a Saloon Row. Chicago, Ill., April 20.—Charles E. Kyle, a painter, who recently came to this city from San Antonio, Tex., was killed last night in a saloon row by a blow on the head with a pool bat by the bar tender, an Italian named Charles Sodini. The murderer was jailed.

IRISH HOME-RULE BILL.

WHAT MR. COLLINGS THINKS OF THE MEASURE.

Its Safeguards Should Be Thoroughly Examined Before It Is Accepted.

LONDON, April 20.—James Collings, Liberal, the author of the "three-crows-and-a-cow" amendment, which defeated the Salisbury government, and who has just been unelected as Parliamentary member for Ipswich, because of fraudulent electioneering purposes, publishes a letter in today's Times, in which he says he deprecates the acceptance of Mr. Gladstone's bill without a thorough examination of the safeguards proposed. On this subject, Mr. Collings says, hardly a sentence has been uttered in any of the responsible Ministers. "The main argument in favor of the home rule bill," said the writer, "is that there is no other alternative to conceding the Irish an independent Parliament than that of coercion. This argument, which has been uttered in a tone of affection for Ireland and in commendation of the present government in that country, absolutely declines to accept, especially at the hands of those who, in a few weeks, have not worked out, but adopted a plan to solve a problem which is the growth of centuries, and who admit that authority and not reason is the basis of their faith."

Mr. Collings then proceeds to show that the safeguard of the proposed double orders in the Irish Parliament is delusive. "The fact that this proposition emanates from a respected Premier almost robs it of its value," he writes, "by the whole Liberal party."

Mr. Collings adds that Mr. Gladstone's original proposal contained a surrender of the control of the Irish customs and excise to the Dublin government and argues that in that shape the home rule bill was right and logical, because no other arrangement could possibly be permanent. A separate Parliament, the writer contends, must demand and would be certain to eventually secure fiscal independence. The Parallelism would be bound to follow the popular stream or be left behind by a new party which would arise and demand the abolition of these things now looked upon as safeguards of the integrity of the empire. "Therefore," Mr. Collings goes on, "we must take it for granted that the congregation of the Liberal party will be a scheme of separation, and for a powerful union, which restrictions it would be impossible to maintain. Those who vote for the measure on its second reading without positive assurance that Irish representation at Westminster will be retained, will vote for virtual secession."

The remainder of the letter is devoted to urging the adoption of Mr. Chamberlain's federation principles instead of those proposed by Mr. Gladstone. John Bright is quoted against the dual principle in an Irish legislature. "Washington's farewell address is referred to as a powerful argument in favor of federation as opposed to separation. The letter concludes as follows: "I yield to none in loyalty, and in admiration, of Mr. Gladstone, but I do complain of his springing Irish schemes upon the country without first consulting the Liberal party."

LETTER FROM JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN. A letter from Mr. Joseph Chamberlain on the difference between his plan of British federation and Mr. Gladstone's home rule policy has been made public by the correspondent who received it, and is attracting attention. In the letter Mr. Chamberlain says: "It is, of course, impossible for any one except a responsible Minister to elaborate a scheme of federation. It is necessary to find how far the Welsh and Scotch, as well as the English, desire decentralization. My idea is that of provincial assemblies, occupying the same position as the local legislatures do in the American and Canadian States, the subjects on which they are allowed to legislate being delegated to them, financial and imperial questions remaining within the control of the Imperial legislature at Westminster. If Wales and Scotland should not desire to have such local legislatures that would be no reason why the experiment of the establishment of one should not be tried in Ireland."

THE FLOOD AT MONTREAL. MONTREAL, April 20.—The water kept going down all last night and today. The water level is almost free from water. On St. Francis Xavier street the flood has receded almost to St. Paul street, and there is a fall of at least two feet in the level of the water. Seven thousand four hundred and twenty-two families have been flooded out, making the total population in the district affected by the flood about 30,000.

QUESTION AND ANSWER. Mr. Dunn Indulges in a Little Humor as Mr. Cleveland's Expense.

New York, April 19.—The following is clipped from the editorial of the Sun this morning: Suppose that after President Grover Cleveland had won the lady whom comely and intelligent countenance was accurately portrayed in the Sun of yesterday, a delegation of solemn priests should go to the White House saying: "Sir, be consistent and not too hasty. There are other candidates. The fact that she has chosen you does not count. Among your rivals there may be some one better fitted for the responsibilities which a strict application of the merit system." Would not Mr. Cleveland kick his advisers out of the door of the White House away over the head of the bronze statue of Gen. Andrew Jackson in Lafayette square?

Cincinnati May Musical Festival. CINCINNATI, April 20.—The auction sales of season tickets to the May musical festival began today with astonishing results. The sales to noon are equal in number to those of the whole day in 1884, while the amount of premiums is greater than at the famous sale in 1880.

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